



PSRP Reporter

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PARAPROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL-RELATED PERSONNEL

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OUR MISSION

The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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Cover photo: JASON COX / OSEA

AFT mourns the loss of two PSRP champions

Maria Portalatin, Linda Bridges loved their union

THE AFT HAS LOST two of its most passionate sisters and leaders.

New York paraprofessional and former AFT Vice President Maria Portalatin, who died in December, was a pioneer, serving on the AFT's original paraprofessional committee and the PSRP program and policy council. She always fought for civil rights, dignity and economic well-being, starting with the first paraprofessional contract in New York City.

AFT Vice President Linda Bridges, who died in January, was a longtime advocate for school support staff in Texas and nationwide. In a state where collective bargaining is banned, Bridges in 1979 pioneered exclusive consultation for school employees—the closest thing to bargaining there is in Texas—when she led the Corpus Christi AFT.

A civil rights pioneer

Starting out as a paraprofessional in New York City, Portalatin was devoted to empowering women and mentoring many of the city's current Latino activists. She helped establish the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

"Maria loved her union and understood its importance to our members' economic well-being," says AFT President Randi Weingarten. "She was a real trailblazer for PSRPs."

One member of the United Federation of Teachers remembers how, as a parent, Portalatin joined the picket line during the UFT's 1968 strike. The months-long strike was contentious in some quarters, including among Latinos, but "Maria was there, Maria was supportive as a parent," says retired elementary school teacher Abe Levine.

After becoming a paraprofessional,

Portalatin went with a group of paras to ask the UFT's president at the time, Al Shanker, if they could join the union. He told them to find out if other paras supported affiliation.

When the answer was yes, Shanker led the way, declaring that unless the teachers accepted the paras, he would resign. "That's how strongly he felt," Levine recalls. "He always said his greatest achievement was bringing in the paraprofessionals."

Portalatin's inspiration touched many, including UFT paraprofessional leaders Shelvy Abrams and Hector Ruiz, who both recall her mental toughness and can-do spirit.

Ruiz singles out her concern for students, her mentoring and how she told him she was proud of him. Ruiz says he often calls upon "her stories of the days where the struggles seemed insurmountable."

A union builder

An elementary special education teacher, Bridges was a charter member of the Corpus Christi local and served as an officer before beginning a 24-year tenure as president. Under her leadership, the local union developed several collaborations with the district. At the national level, in addition to being elected as an AFT vice president, Bridges served on the AFT organizing committee.

During Bridges' run as president of Texas AFT, which began in 2005, the union continued its growth in membership and influence. The union grew from 48,000 members to more than 65,000 members, and it is recognized as one of the AFT's most effective state federations.

Under Bridges' leadership, Texas AFT saw significant gains in salary and health insurance. The federation also is known for statewide leadership development.

Bridges also was active in labor and community organizations in Texas, including the Texas AFL-CIO and the Juvenile Assessment Center. According to Texas AFL-CIO President Becky Moeller: "Countless Texans who may never have met Linda Bridges are better off for her insistence that the public schools of Texas fully reflect a quest for a better future."

Maria Portalatin, left, with then-candidate Barack Obama. At right, Linda Bridges.





Law needs to keep high standards for paraprofessionals

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

“PARAS ARE A VITAL PART of the complete educational process,” wrote one school support worker from Illinois. “We have to make sure that all our paraprofessionals are not only qualified, but have the continuing professional development needed to perform the duties they are hired for,” wrote another. “We are asked to perform many tasks with students which require training,” wrote yet another. “We cannot go backwards.”

These are but a few of the many comments paraprofessionals from across the country submitted regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the ESEA as part of his War on Poverty—the very same year our own secretary-treasurer, Lorretta Johnson, started working as a paraprofessional in Baltimore City public schools. She described recently the transformation the law brought: “By 1968, there were more than 3,500 paraprofessionals supporting nearly every classroom and student in the city. Our city—once plagued with Jim Crow discrimination and deep inequity in our schools—got the boost that it needed to meet students where they were and put them on a path to achieving the American dream.”

The original law included vital support for classroom paraprofessionals, who help lower class sizes, provide individual attention for children with special needs, and help English language learners. It helped level the playing field for students, and as a result we saw the achievement gap shrink across the country.

No Child Left Behind, the latest iteration of ESEA, has allowed high-stakes testing to eclipse all else, including our kids. Tests should be used to get parents and school communities the information they need to help students make progress. Instead, under NCLB, they’ve been used to sanction and scapegoat, and progress has slowed to a halt. That’s why we’re fighting to limit the stakes of testing in the reauthorization of this law.

However, out of all the things NCLB got wrong, it got this right: It gave our nation’s schools more highly qualified paraprofessionals.

NCLB put in place qualification requirements for paraprofessionals working in high-poverty districts. Those requirements helped stop school districts from hiring paraprofessionals with little experience in education and providing no professional training for them. Before those requirements became law, paraprofessionals often were assigned classroom tasks for which, through no fault of their own, they were neither well-prepared nor equipped.

to determine certification and licensure requirements. Only 11 states have qualification requirements on the books; if enacted, 39 states could go back to low or no requirements under this law.

What’s more, these proposals would actually drive further inequities by moving money meant to go to public schools that teach poor kids and giving it to better-off schools. Nationwide, high-poverty districts could lose about \$85 per student, while more-affluent districts could gain \$290 per student, according to a report from the Center for American Progress.

With half of public school students living in poverty and more than 30 states funding



JOHN HARRINGTON

Out of all the things NCLB got wrong, it got this right: It gave our schools more highly qualified paraprofessionals.

Today, paraprofessionals are qualified to provide much-needed instructional support. School systems such as Albuquerque, Baltimore and Pittsburgh are among the many examples of places where higher qualifications are contributing to better student outcomes.

Despite this progress, House and Senate Republican proposals would turn back the clock. They would roll back the qualification requirements for paraprofessionals working in high-poverty schools and leave it to states

public education at pre-recession levels, we need to level the playing field for all kids. We need a law that helps give kids the resources they need, including computers, lower class sizes and highly qualified support staff, even when their communities can’t afford them.

There’s so much at stake with the reauthorization of ESEA. It’s up to all of us to let our elected officials know what kids need, and that starts with equal resources and highly qualified educators in every classroom.

Putting the **U** in **Union**

Together, PSRPs take problem solving into our own hands

SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF think about everything we do through the lens of whether it's good for our students, schools, families and communities. We know that if we want to change things for the better, sometimes it takes more than keeping our heads down and doing our jobs. It takes union activism.

Luckily, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, by the very nature of our work, know how to solve problems and engage with our communities. And luckily, such deep engagement can be fun and rewarding. Here are four inspiring stories of PSRPs from AFT affiliates around the country—**Oregon, Ohio, California and Illinois**—who have demonstrated how you put the “u” in union.

Our dough: Oregon

School support workers rallied in Oregon this winter for a higher minimum wage. The Oregon School Employees Association supports legislation that would gradually increase the state minimum wage to \$15 per hour. OSEA members turned out in force this January, joining a crowd of about 500 at the Capitol in Salem, because raising the wage would lift thousands of families out of poverty.

“There are many reasons for us to increase Oregon’s minimum wage. In fact, there are 200,000 reasons—that’s the number of Oregon children who live in households below the federal poverty line,” OSEA President and AFT Vice President Tim Stoelb told

the crowd. “The majority of OSEA members work in K-12 schools. Our members see the struggle of working families to

make ends meet reflected in the faces of their students every day. I stand before you to ask all Oregonians to demand an end to an employer’s ability to legally pay poverty wages.”

The rally sprang from an OSEA survey in which 1,500 members weighed in on the effects of poverty in their communities. But they didn’t stop with the #FightFor15 rally.

On Presidents Day, members returned to the state Capitol to support paid sick leave for all working people in Oregon. If passed, thousands of workers, including OSEA members, would be able to earn and accumulate at least 56 hours of paid sick leave per year.

But better pay isn’t the only kind of dough members are raising. In Baker, a community in east Oregon, members were looking to start a union-sponsored service project, so they created FEED (Feed Everyone Every Day). They round up donated loaves of

bread to help fill the bottomless stomachs of middle schoolers. The bread is used three ways: to help students get a substantive breakfast; to make PB&J sandwiches for kids who take part in after-school programs and are still at school around 5:30; and to be tucked into grocery bags going home with kids to tide them over for the weekend.

“We feed the minds of our students every day” is how Ma’Lena Wirth, a special education paraprofessional and chapter leader, explains members’ motivation. “Now let’s help feed their bodies.”

She tells of a well-to-do mom who donated a ton of bread in gratitude after her daughter received a sandwich

after school, and a community leader who, wherever he goes, can count on “somebody handing him a check” for the union’s dough-raiser. Cash donations—which over the past few months have outstripped loaves of bread—allow FEED to buy fresh food. Contributions are rolling in from the Lions and Rotary clubs, the Baker County Community Literacy Coalition and others. In December, OSEA members took a month off because they had enough bread stashed in church freezers.

At the end of this school year, the unionists of Baker (yes, they are aware of how cute that name is) plan to challenge members to fill a whole school bus with bread to cover summer programs.

Our leadership: Ohio

Oliver Collins had been in the workforce for decades when he came to the Toledo schools in 2002, eventually becoming a full-time paraprofessional for students with multiple disabilities. He loves serving on the Toledo Federation of Teachers’ political action committee among paras, teachers and retirees.

Last year, with elections coming on, the union’s political action team met monthly to discuss state education funding, candidates for public office and issues like child trafficking. Committee members also screened candidates, using surveys, forums and meet-and-greets to help members get a handle on how education-friendly the candidates were. One of the best questions, Collins says, is: “Does anyone in your family attend public schools?”

Collins manned phone banks and helped host a meet-the-candidate event, the TFT Tailgate Party, in the union parking lot. His political activism was so meaningful that Collins applied for a “Paraprofessionals as Leaders” program sponsored by the Toledo

Union volunteers in Oregon collect bread to feed hungry kids during after-school programs.



OSEA PHOTO

federation and the AFT. As part of the program, nine PSRPs are selected to attend Saturday trainings once a month for five months. Each member will request a project ranging from bullying to student testing. The Common Core has piqued Collins' interest for his own project. In addition, the nine leaders in training will create a group community engagement project that Toledo's hundreds of paraprofessionals can take part in.



Toledo members meet and greet candidates for public office in the union's parking lot.

Our clout: California

Sometimes it takes an injustice to spur membership, as when 60 unsung heroes flexed their muscle last year and joined the Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees.

Noon duty supervisors served as at-will employees and worked only a few hours a day at the district's six elementary and two middle schools near Los Angeles, but the final straw, according to Carl Williams, a custodian and the local's president, was not getting the 4 percent raise that all the other classified and certified workers received.

"They didn't get the raise because they were not part of the bargaining unit," Williams says. "They were afraid to speak up because they're at-will employees."

Having organized themselves, the noon duty supervisors now will negotiate a contract. The Lawndale school district has new funding, including \$90,000 for noon duty supervisors, whom Williams calls "the unsung heroes" in schoolyards across America.

"They are the mediators, the referees, the listening ears on the playground," he says. "They really are the first line of defense for these kids."

And because they acted together to join the union, they now have a voice.

Our training: Illinois

Activism means saying yes and following through. Take two PSRPs, for example, who built up their professionalism by enrolling in AFT train-the-trainer courses a few years ago. They've trained colleagues in skills like managing student behavior and workplace safety.

Last fall, the two were asked to teach high school and college students about workplace safety through a federal training program. They said yes. "We took a leap of faith," says Rendy Hahn, secretary for the Cahokia, Ill., school district's maintenance department. "I've never been in a classroom. I never work with kids face to face."

Hahn, who belongs to the Cahokia Federation of Teachers, and Connie McKenna, a paraprofessional and member of the Pontiac-William Holliday Federation of Teachers, teamed up to train about 30 students who work on set production and media at the Village Theatre in Centreville, a small community between East St. Louis and Cahokia.

The theater, founded by jazz great Eddie Fisher and run by his widow, gives young people a chance to learn job skills, and the AFT training last October aimed to keep them safe—both at the theater and at their other after-school jobs. "In certain industries, training is sort of an afterthought," McKenna says. "Sometimes employers only give training if they know they're going to be inspected."

"The kids were wonderful," Hahn says. "They had all kinds of questions. It's very enjoyable when you get that 'aha' moment." She's hoping to continue training after she retires. That speaks to her professionalism as a school employee, a unionist and a mom—her desire to help students "stop and think a little bit, keep them safe."

Our union: AFT

These members' accomplishments are moving and meaningful, but not miraculous. They're the kind of success any AFT member can achieve. In fact, you may be doing something similar in your union. If so, we want to hear about it.

Staff at these four locals started out with baby steps, asked for help, worked together and started solving problems together. Like other AFT members across the country, they understood that we all are the union—that union begins with "u."

Little things you can do to help in union-building

INVOLVED MEMBERS are the strength of our union. Here are some ideas from PSRP activists on how to increase members' engagement:

- **Help make co-workers' introduction to the union a really positive experience.** Most people don't know a whole lot about unions. Introduce yourself, explain your role in the union and note that our union sees their success as a priority.
- **If they're new to the job, offer a walking tour of the work site** to introduce co-workers and to point out important locations, like restrooms, break rooms, union bulletin boards and emergency exits. Check in on them occasionally.
- **Remember that many hands make light work.** Share your union projects with other members. Never assume that if people are quiet, they don't have the chops for a union role. They may be waiting for a chance to contribute.
- **Ask fellow members lots of questions and share your firsthand knowledge, personal experiences and what you've come to know.** Overcommunicate. Overextend yourself. There's a reason we call each other "brothers and sisters."
- **Help solve problems together, before they escalate.** We're all in the same boat. It's not *the* union. It's *our* union.
- **Dare to hope.** Better campus processes are possible, from classroom to cafeteria to school grounds. Improvements that might seem hard for one employee to accomplish can happen when all of us act together.



Students learn from two PSRP trainers in Illinois how to stay safe on the job.

Member uses union CPR training to save a life

'I didn't want the mother to die in front of her daughter'

MOST MEMBERS WHO get AFT training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation will never have the chance to use it, but that turned out not to be the case for Robin Herrin, a special education paraprofessional who saved a woman's life on New Year's Eve.



HERRIN

She was ringing in the new year with her husband and sister-in-law at a nearby resort casino when, after dinner, she heard a woman cry out for help because her wheelchair-bound mother had slumped over and stopped breathing.

"I didn't want the mother to die in front of her daughter," says Herrin, a member of Red River United in Shreveport, La.

Herrin had taken CPR training at the AFT several years ago. She ran over to find the older woman without a pulse or breath. As she'd practiced in AFT training, Herrin stated that she knew how to do CPR, asked a bystander to call 911, and told another bystander to bring the hotel's defibrillator.

It seemed like just a few breaths and a couple of rounds of compressions before paramedics arrived. By the time they did, the woman had started breathing again.

"I was a little bit shaken up," she says, "but I was glad I was able to help."

Herrin joins the ranks of AFT members who have become everyday heroes through their safety training. She is quick to credit the

AFT trainers who helped her gain confidence. With years of experience as a para at Sun City Elementary School in Bossier, Herrin was used to directing children, not adults.

She also credits her local union president, Jackie Lansdale, for being a role model in acting courageously. Lansdale tosses the compliment right back. "The fact that she stepped up to save a woman's life is just something that Robin would do," Lansdale says. "I am proud to have her in our union."

Herrin hadn't known anything about unions until she went to a meeting about five years ago and thought, "I might like

this." Well, she sure did like it. She became a building rep at her school, helps organize PSRP conferences and has traveled to the state capital to stand up for education.

Before her union work kicked in, Herrin had been super active in Mardi Gras, planning balls and riding on floats.

"I gave up some of those real fun things so that I could do something that was still fun but more worthwhile," she says, adding that she wants to leave a legacy for students: "I want things to be better."

You could say for a fact that Robin Herrin already has made things better.

AFT joins effort to help grieving students

New resource helps school staff know what to do and say

NINE IN 10 CHILDREN suffer the death of a family member or friend by the end of high school, yet a recent survey indicates that only 7 percent of AFT members have received the type of training that can help them support students at these difficult times. That is a terrible mismatch of challenges and supports, a problem the AFT is working to fix in partnership with other groups in the Coalition to Support Grieving Students.

The coalition has unveiled **Grieving Students.org**, a resource designed to help school employees do their best in supporting bereaved kids. AFT President Randi Weingarten took part in the January launch, telling of the deep pride she felt in our union's role as a founding partner in this project.

"More than 2 in 5 teachers say schools pay more attention to how students are dressed than to student grief," Weingarten said. "As a teacher, I encountered students regularly who were grieving. I was glad I could be there to help but also was able to refer them to resources in the school for support. All of that has changed with the loss of school guidance counselors, social workers and psychologists. We should be wrapping mental health services around schools to help address grief."

The coalition's new resource is free and captures best practices through videos and downloadable modules, materials informed by the work of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement. At GrievingStudents.org, school staff can engage in self-directed



professional development that provides the information, insights and practical advice needed to better understand and meet the needs of grieving students. Topics include grief triggers, peer supports, connecting with families, impact on learning, and what to say—and not say.

Founding member groups of the coalition include the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Nurses, the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Education Association. The lead founders are the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement and the New York Life Foundation. The website was created in partnership with Scholastic Inc.



Trainers wanted!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO become certified to teach first-aid, CPR and AED in your community? Sign up for our training course April 15-17 in Washington, D.C. Space is limited. For eligibility requirements and other specifics, contact Sabrina Simmons at ssimmons@aft.org.



CHARLOTTE SUN / DEBBIE FLESSNER

Luckily for students, food service worker and AFT member Kat Mims (at right) was there to show PSRP-for-a-day Debbie Flessner how it's done.

PSRPS WIN RECOGNITION

Public acclaim comes rarely for school support personnel, but back-to-school season last fall provided a windfall of publicity for school bus drivers, bus attendants, cafeteria workers, custodians and paraprofessionals in southwest Florida.

A splashy front-page spread in the *Charlotte Sun* featured a back-to-school campaign initiated by the Charlotte County Support Personnel Association, which let the newspaper's staff writers and editors, along with other members of the community, try to perform the jobs of school employees for a day. "I've Been Back to School" is in its second year as a joint effort with the Charlotte

Florida Education Association and the Charlotte County schools. "Little did I know what a huge responsibility [it] would be" to work in the school cafeteria, wrote *Sun* correspondent Debbie Flessner. Most impressive about food service workers: "Each and every one of them was kind to the students and to one another, and extremely hardworking."

Driver Roger McKeon and bus attendant Ethel Rice were two PSRPs senior writer Christy Feinberg spent the day with, part of "a small army of quick-witted, team-minded, safety-conscious professionals who have a great responsibility twice a day: safely driving students to and from school." These workers arrive

every day at the transportation building by 5:30 a.m., working a morning shift and returning for an afternoon shift that often ends after 5:30 p.m. Drivers and attendants, Feinberg noted, are the first staff to notice if kids are sick or upset, and the last ones to see them at the end of the day.

CONNECTICUT STUDIES PARAPROFESSIONAL STAFFING

A study of paraprofessionals by the Connecticut Legislature cites paras' vital role in special education and makes recommendations for improved training and staffing levels. AFT Connecticut successfully advocated in the last legislative session for the state General Assembly to study paraprofessional staffing in public schools. The resulting 11 recommendations would set procedures for better paraprofessional training and deployment.

STAFF PRESSURED TO ADMINISTER EPIPENS

California public schools are now required to stock emergency epinephrine auto-injectors for students with severe allergies, and "volunteer staff" are required to administer them. Although the new law includes some training provisions and civil

liability protections, requiring staff to make life-or-death decisions outside of their expertise is a lot to ask, says Paula Phillips, president of the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees.

Last year, AFT convention delegates approved a resolution Phillips introduced asking for federal regulation of medical procedures in schools. Our California affiliate has been pushing for state legislation that would assign a nurse and a mental health professional in every public school.

PSRP ADDRESSES FORUM ON LATINAS

New Mexico paraprofessional and AFT Vice President Kathy Chavez was among three Latinas who spoke at a national conference in February, briefing participants on community engagement and legislative priorities such as immigration reform. Chavez is president of the Albuquerque Educational Assistants Association and executive vice president of AFT New Mexico. She began her career as a bus driver and went on to work with medically fragile children at Casa Angelica. Among her accomplishments is helping pass state legislation that set a minimum pay plan for educational assistants.

'Transitioning to Kindergarten' makes strong debut

Early childhood educators enrich skills to give preschoolers a positive start

THREE SCHOOLS ARE SPEARHEADING a pilot program in Brooklyn, N.Y., aimed at taking "Transitioning to Kindergarten," a toolkit co-created by the AFT and the National Center for Learning Disabilities, and making it the newest resource for enriching the home-school connection, promoting dialogue across grade levels and giving every child a personal bridge from early learning into kindergarten.

Paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators and parents at PS 156, PS 158 and PS 184 are engaged in the effort. The educators began working with Transitioning to Kindergarten during training in January and spent the following weeks looking for ways to test the toolkit and report back to the AFT on how educators can incorporate it into their practice. The effort is supported by the United Federation of Teachers, the AFT and partners like First Book, which is donating children's books.

"The more tools in our toolkit, the better," says UFT Vice President Karen Alford, who helped lead early rounds of training. Alford says the initiative complements new developments in New York City, such as Mayor Bill de Blasio's move to extend pre-K to 31,000 students, as well as new opportunities for professional growth in a union-negotiated contract that educators overwhelmingly ratified late last year.

There are many strengths in the pilot program, particularly when

it comes to getting everyone on the same page. It focuses on student growth—both at home and at school—and offers ways for educators and parents to share what they've observed about every child.

"This is a great book," PS 156 parent coordinator Carolyn Smith says of "Getting to Know My Child." The component helps early educators work with the home to create a document that showcases each student's interests and strengths—something the child can give to his or her kindergarten teacher on the first day as a valuable bridge between home and school.

"So far, I'm loving it," says PSRP Etharis Kaiasoulis of PS 156. "This looks like a very good tool, and it's going to tell us a lot."

A training session in Brooklyn includes paras and teachers from several schools.



JONATHAN PICKLES

A frightening police stop for a PSRP leader

"OFFICER, WHY are you stopping me?"

School food service manager Steven Brinkley recounted the following experience in January, during the AFT's first forum in a yearlong initiative on racial justice.

It happened a few months ago, on a Wednesday night at about 11. Brinkley left a Masons' meeting and was driving his SUV to his suburban Philadelphia home in Glenolden, wearing a black suit, a white shirt and a black bow tie, when he noticed police lights and heard a siren.

A Delaware County police officer pulled him over. He asked Brinkley if he'd been drinking.

"No, sir," Brinkley answered in his quiet, polite way. "I've just come from a Masons' meeting."

Brinkley knew the taillights on his Chevy Tahoe were working; he'd checked. He knew he wasn't speeding. He thought he may have swerved a bit as he reached for a cigarette, so he asked the officer why he'd been stopped.

He never did get an answer, but one answer suggests itself. Brinkley is African-American.

"Officer, why are you stopping me?" he asked, and later asked again. Anyone acquainted with Brinkley knows that he is soft-spoken, unassuming. He has worked for the Philadelphia public schools for 21 years, and has served on the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' executive board for about a decade. He is a member of the AFT PSRP program and policy council.

He also is persistent: "Officer, why are you stopping me?"

The police officer called for backup. Instead of telling Brinkley why he'd been stopped, the first officer said to the second, "You know, I'm tired of listening to this."

They took Brinkley's car keys and closed

the door to his Tahoe, handcuffed Brinkley, put him in the first policeman's car and drove him around, with one police car following the other, for about 20 minutes.

Finally, the police stopped in a residential neighborhood, told him to get out of the cruiser, turned him around and uncuffed him. "Next time I ask you to do something, you do it and don't give me any back talk," the first officer said, after which he threw Brinkley's keys on the ground and told him to find his way home "as best you can."



Food service manager Steven Brinkley was told to find his own way home.

NICO PAVAN

Alone in the darkness, Brinkley, in his own words, grew "angry," then "livid."

He found a Wawa convenience store and paid someone \$5 to borrow a phone and call his wife, who mapped the address and came to get him. They found his truck not far from their home. Then he told his wife, and only his wife, what had happened—until the AFT forum on race (go.aft.org/psrps_justice), which took place at a meeting of the PSRP program and policy council.

"Who was going to believe me?" he asks.

It does seem incredible. In fact, some PSRP council members first thought he was describing an incident from 40 years ago.

Brinkley's own reaction shows just how far we still have to go. How many others never speak up because they're afraid they won't be believed?

Our fight for justice

AMERICA STRIVES TO BE a more perfect union—one that believes in freedom, opportunity and justice for all. Every day, our union advocates for economic opportunity and high-quality public education. Yet, too many things still stand in the way of the American dream, including prejudice and inequality.

Change takes time. But what sets our nation apart is that we never stop trying to make things better. Read "Our Fight for Justice," at go.aft.org/fight4justice.

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PSRPs

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